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President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

Tribute to the memory of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, late Amir of the State of Bahrain

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): This afternoon it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late Amir of the State of Bahrain, His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, who passed away on 6 March 1999.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of Bahrain to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Bahrain and to the bereaved family of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa.

I invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Tunisia, who will speak on behalf of the African States.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the New York delegations of the Group of African States I would first like to express our most sincere condolences to the leadership and the people of the State of Bahrain on the sudden passing of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa. I would like to express to you, Mr. Chairman, our sincere thanks for organizing this meeting to pay tribute to this great man who suddenly passed away in the prime of life.

Today we pay tribute to an eminent leader whose wisdom and kindness were well known, a leader who devoted his life to building the modern State of Bahrain and to establishing its capacity to progress and prosper. He adopted foreign policies that made Bahrain a force for stability in the region and a focus of international admiration, trust and respect.

The African States join the international community in expressing their tribute to His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa and their appreciation for his great achievements both within Bahrain and externally. Africa pays tribute to the effective role he played in promoting security for and cooperation with all peace-loving States and people.

Africa, which greatly appreciates its strong ties with all Arab countries, including Bahrain, considers the passing of His Highness a great loss to the whole world. We find consolation in the smooth transfer of power to His Excellency the new Amir of Bahrain, Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa. This ensures continued progress on the path towards peace, security and prosperity in the region.

The African Group, looking forward to maintaining its strong ties with Bahrain, wishes that country all success in its present endeavours.

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Qatar, who will speak on behalf of the Asian States.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour, as Chairman of the Group of Asian States and as Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, to join the international community in offering our condolences and our deep sympathy to the Government and the people of Bahrain and to the bereaved family on the death of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the late Amir of Bahrain, on 6 March 1999.

Shaikh Isa spent his life devoted to work in a spirit of generosity and selflessness on all fronts. He constantly sought peace and stability in the Gulf region and in the Middle East in general. His loss is an irreparable one for his country, for his people, for the Arab community and for the world as a whole. We are certain this His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa will follow in his father's footsteps in championing his country.

On behalf of the Group of Asian States I would like to convey our condolences to Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, to the suffering people and to the Government, as well as to the family of the late Amir. We hope that he will find his place of peace in heaven, and that this trial will be his last.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Ukraine, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European States.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): Two weeks ago a sad event brought deep sorrow and grief to the people of the State of Bahrain and to the entire world — the passing of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, late Amir of Bahrain.

On 6 March, the heart of one of the prominent political figures and great leaders of today's Arab world stopped beating. He was a man whose lifelong commitment and personal contribution to the cooperation and stability of the Gulf States and the cause of peace in the Middle East was internationally recognized and highly appreciated.

Recalling Shaikh Isa's wide popularity among the people of his country, one could rightly say that he was an exemplary national leader and an outstanding personality. It is an undeniable fact that it was under the late Amir's wise rule and thanks to his personal efforts that the State of Bahrain achieved great success in the development of its statehood and economy.

The bitter news about the passing of Shaikh Isa echoed with a feeling of loss in the hearts of peoples in all parts of the world. In this regard, on behalf of the Governments and the peoples of the Eastern European States, I have the honour to extend our most sincere condolences to the bereaved royal family and to the people of Bahrain. May the soul of Shaikh Isa rest in peace.

While joining the Bahraini people and the Arab nations in mourning the great statesman and distinguished regional leader, we would like to express the hope that in running the country the new Head of State, His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, will follow the course of his late father in pursuit of the good and the stability of the State of Bahrain and of peace and cooperation in the whole region. We wish Shaikh Hamad every success in accomplishing this important mission.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Guyana, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak this afternoon, joins in this public expression of sympathy to the royal family, the Government and the people of Bahrain in their sad loss of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the Amir of Bahrain.

As has been remarked in the media, the Amir's passing marks the end of an era in his country. Long a dominant figure in Bahrain's recent history, he was held in high esteem by his people, and the remarkable outpouring of grief that followed his death was a testimony to the respect that he had earned among them. His Highness the Amir's rule, which spanned almost four decades, resulted in major changes that established Bahrain as a major financial centre in the region of the Middle East. His warm personality is said to have won his country many friends and supporters of its development.

In the eyes of many, Bahrain's relative tranquillity and prosperity was no mean achievement. Within recent times, Bahrain has served in the Security Council of the United Nations, where it has sought to promote the cause of peace and development, particularly for small States

that would wish to guarantee their peace and security. This is indicative of the country's commitment under the late Amir to the purposes and principles of the United Nations and of its willingness to play an active role in international affairs.

On behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, therefore, I wish to ask Ambassador Buallay, the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations, through you, Mr. President, to be good enough to convey to the royal family and to the Bahraini authorities this tribute to the late Amir, together with our deepest condolences.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Denmark, who will speak on behalf of the Western European and other States.

Mr. Bøjer (Denmark): On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, it is with deep sorrow that I pay tribute to His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the late Amir of the State of Bahrain. We offer our condolences and sympathies to the people of Bahrain and to the family of Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, as well as to our colleague Ambassador Buallay, Permanent Representative of Bahrain.

Bahrain has lost its leader. Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa had ruled Bahrain since 1961. For almost four decades he was a prominent force in Bahrain and in the Middle East. He managed to transform Bahrain into a modern society without losing the unique and ancient cultural identity of the nation.

In 1971, Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa declared Bahrain's independence. His comprehensive understanding of his country's unique cultural identity and resources helped secure stability and prosperous development for Bahrain. Bahrain became proof that it was possible to prosper in the Middle East without vast energy reserves. Bahrain is a strong partner today that has shown the courage and the ability to work for peace and stability in the Middle East. As a member of the Security Council for 1998 and 1999, Bahrain is fulfilling an outstanding chance to make an even greater contribution to a more peaceful world.

The legacy of Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa is now entrusted to His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, who we are confident will govern with the same sureness of purpose and wisdom as did his late father. We convey our best hopes and wishes to the new head of State and to the people of Bahrain. May Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa now rest in peace.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): It was with deep personal as well as official sadness that I learned of the passing of His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa on 6 March. Shaikh Isa was a dear friend of the United States and a tireless devotee of the cause of peace and international understanding.

I had the great honour of knowing him personally while posted to Bahrain early in my career. The Shaikh was kind enough to take time to share with me, a very junior diplomat, his wisdom and his experience. Shaikh Isa was always that way. He treated both his own people and his guests — whether elevated or humble, senior or junior — with friendship, understanding and a great sense of humour.

On the day of Shaikh Isa's passing, President Clinton, speaking on behalf of the American people, said he took heart from Shaikh Isa's personal commitment to forwarding the cause of peace. Secretary of State Albright echoed those words, recognizing that Shaikh Isa had, "dedicated himself to the eradication of hatred, the dismantling of differences and the promotion of genuine friendship among the peoples of the world".

His Highness Shaikh Isa's wisdom and devotion to his people were well known in Bahrain and throughout the region. His legacy will live on through our common efforts to find peace and stability in the Middle East. I convey condolences to his family and support to His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa, as he embarks on the wise path set out by his father in the quest for peace and development for his people and for the world.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Bahrain.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like to extend my sincere thanks to you, Mr. President, and to the members of the General Assembly for observing a minute of silence on the occasion of the passing of Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the ruler of my country. I greatly appreciate the expressions of tribute given by the representatives of regional groups. What has been said today has reflected

the international status enjoyed by our leader until his death.

On 6 March, Bahrain lost one of its great leaders, perhaps its greatest. He was there when Bahrain gained its independence, and he was there as Bahrain developed. He devised modernization plans that did not depend on a single source of income, and a multifaceted economic life involving well-managed financial institutions. This form of development helped shape the history of Bahrain, which has been characterized by openness and the confluence of civilizations. As he faced the challenges of his career, he was accompanied by Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, who is now the leader of Bahrain, and by his Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalifa Bin Sulman Al-Khalifa, who has always contributed to this great progress.

Shaikh Isa was a supporter of regional and international cooperation. He enthusiastically agreed to Bahrain's membership of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations, and always contributed to its activities in those organizations. He was always a believer in dialogue for the settlement of disputes and always followed the path of peace.

Among Shaikh Isa's many qualities was his great love for meeting with people in order to solve their problems. He favoured the direct method of dealing with people; indeed he died as he met with one of his people. That is why the people of Bahrain, within and outside the country, are still unable to believe that he is no longer with us. Because he was so close to his people, they find it difficult to believe that he is dead. But that is the way of man and the will of God.

Again, I thank members for their sincere statements and condolences. Our consolation is that following the death of Shaikh Isa we have other men who will continue on his path towards peace and security.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Request for the reopening of the consideration of agenda item 110 (Human rights questions)

Letter by the Secretary-General (A/53/862)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In his letter, the Secretary-General informs the General Assembly that paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 52/135 of 12 December 1997 requested him to appoint a group of experts for Cambodia, the report of which has now been submitted. In order for the General Assembly to consider the report, it will be necessary for the Assembly to reopen the consideration of agenda item 110, entitled "Human rights questions".

May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to reopen consideration of agenda item 110, entitled "Human rights questions"?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 15 September 1998, the Assembly allocated this item to the Third Committee. However, as the Third Committee has already completed its work, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to consider agenda item 110 directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 58 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that at the 94th plenary meeting, held on 18 February 1999, I announced that further consultations were needed on the closing date of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly and on the opening date of the fifty-fourth session. In addition, consultations were needed on the dates of the general debate of the fifty-fourth session and on the dates of the two-day special session on small island developing States. As members are aware, setting these dates has become a pressing issue for delegations.

Extensive consultations have been held, during which several, unfortunately conflicting, proposals were made. Consultations are continuing, since this year there are a number of special factors that complicate the search for a solution acceptable to all. I urge representatives to ensure that these consultations are completed soon, and urge them to be flexible in this regard, so that we can overcome the problem, for it is absolutely necessary for us to take a decision on this matter in the next few days.

Agenda item 169

Observer status for the Customs Cooperation Council in the General Assembly

Draft resolution (A/53/L.75)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Chile to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.75.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Customs Cooperation Council, better known by its working name, the World Customs Organization, is an intergovernmental organization of 150 member countries. The organization was established in 1947. Its mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of customs administrations in the areas of compliance with trade regulations, protection of society and revenue collection, thereby contributing to the economic and social well-being of nations.

The various aspects of the work of this organization were highlighted in the explanatory memorandum annexed to document A/53/236. I should like, however, to stress the work being done by the organization in the harmonization and simplification of international customs procedures. The efforts made in this area have achieved more effective and efficient customs administrations, reduced trade barriers and, ultimately, provided better services to international trade.

Among others, the organization has developed a special programme on the reform and modernization of customs, the purpose of which is to help its members to be self-sufficient in customs management. Another programme being implemented addresses the campaign against customs fraud, which, in coordination with a training programme for customs officials in developing countries, demonstrates the concern of the World Customs Organization for taking up issues that are at the heart of the problems encountered by customs administration, irrespective of the degree of development of the participating member States.

In order to comply with its constitutional mandate, the World Customs Organization has signed a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding with various international organs and agencies, within and outside the United Nations system. Among these, we would mention the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Intellectual Property Organization. It enjoys working relations with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs, among others. It is currently negotiating a memorandum of understanding with UNCTAD.

It also enjoys formal relations with the secretariats of various international conventions. Two instances worth mentioning are that of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Last June, the Council of the World Customs Organization, meeting in Morocco, adopted a resolution aimed at securing observer status in the General Assembly. Today's meeting represents the culmination of that process.

The request fulfils the criteria for the granting of observer status with the General Assembly laid down in decision 49/426 of 9 December 1994. Indeed, the World Customs Organization is an intergovernmental organization that carries out activities on issues of interest to the General Assembly. The granting of observer status would make it possible to harmonize, strengthen and extend cooperation at the highest level between the two organizations and would contribute to avoiding the duplication of efforts and resources. Thus, our existing relationships would be improved at different levels with various United Nations specialized bodies and agencies. We believe that this would be to the benefit of both organizations and their member States.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no further speakers on this item.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.75. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.75 was adopted (resolution 53/216).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the resolution just adopted, I call on the observer for the Customs Cooperation Council.

Mr. Tweddle (Customs Cooperation Council): It is a great honour for me, on behalf of the World Customs Organization (WCO) — or, under its legal name, the Customs Cooperation Council — to say a few words to the General Assembly.

As I take the floor, allow me to express the first two feelings that I experienced at the announcement of the Assembly's decision to grant us observer status.

First of all, I felt great satisfaction, because the granting of observer status is a sign of the excellent relationships which have been built between our organizations and which have been consolidated with time. The cooperative relations between the WCO and specialized United Nations institutions, and the various memorandums of understanding concluded with these United Nations bodies — which we have just heard about from the Ambassador of Chile — are a sound testament to this.

I thank the Assembly for the decision it has just made to allow the World Customs Organization to participate in its work as an Observer. I would also like to express our deep appreciation to the Government of Chile for sponsoring this initiative and to all the countries from around the world that sponsored the resolution.

My second feeling at this moment is an awareness of the important consequences of the decision. Far from being an end in itself, the status granted today represents a starting point from which the World Customs Organization can strengthen customs action around the world and consolidate our relations in the common interest of the social, environmental and economic well-being of nations.

The World Customs Organization is the only international organization to deal exclusively with customs issues. At the time of our founding in the late 1940s, the Organization's main mission was to facilitate and to allow the development of international trade. The harmonization and uniform application of systems and customs procedures represented the two pillars of its activity. The World Customs Organization has contributed to the development of an environment which has enabled international trade to increase by 14 times since we were founded.

The world has changed a great deal since 1953 and customs administrations have had to adapt accordingly. Protection of our society has become one of the main missions of customs administrations, along with the traditional role of the collection of duties and taxes. We are now in the middle of further great changes, such as the globalization of markets and the dramatic impact of electronic commerce and mass communications by computer.

But all good things come at a price. Crime, which has taken on an international dimension, has profited from these phenomena, benefiting from the speed and anonymity that modern forms of transport and communication offer. Customs have had to adapt to these new challenges. Today, they are key players in the national and international machinery for fighting all aspects of transnational crime.

Illicit trafficking by organized crime syndicates must at some point cross frontiers, frequently using the same routes and modes of transport as legitimate international trade. Without reiterating all the areas in which customs have a role to play to stop illegal trade, let me mention just a few. They include international trade in firearms and endangered species, intellectual property fraud, revenue evasion, nuclear materials' smuggling and so on. It should be highlighted that over 75 per cent of drug seizures worldwide by weight are made by Customs personnel at frontiers.

Organized crime is a very significant phenomenon which casts a dark shadow on the safety and well-being of citizens and nations. We must all be efficient and effective in the fight against organized crime. The closer cooperation and mutual support that are confirmed by the Assembly's decision to give the WCO observer status will certainly help achieve this. A global and multidisciplinary approach is the key if we want to defeat such a complex and multifaceted reality as transnational organized crime. Indeed, it would be naive to believe that a single country or organization could effectively combat crime using purely national or uncoordinated means. It is crucial to coordinate and combine all enforcement efforts towards a common objective. The new development in the relationship between the United Nations and the World Customs Organization complements well the formal cooperation agreement entered into last November between the WCO and our counterpart police organization, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). We firmly believe that the international organizations must set an example in terms of mutual support and cooperation, which we hope will be followed and replicated at national and regional levels.

We fully recognize and support the United Nations function in defining a worldwide policy on the fight

against crime, but we consider that the members of the World Customs Organization can make a significant contribution to achieving agreed global objectives by using the WCO's experience, communications networks and technology. The WCO and all customs administrations are proud to have been granted United Nations observer status. This appointment will enable us to perform our mission with even greater effectiveness.

Today's decision is another step forward in strengthening the protection of our citizens and the social, environmental and economic well-being of our nations. Let it be a clear symbol of our common will to fight all types of transnational crime and to contribute to world economic development through the provision of modern trade instruments and standard, simplified and efficient customs systems and procedures.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 169?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 167

Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): A few days ago, the Security Council devoted a plenary meeting to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Today it is the General Assembly that has decided to look into agenda item 167, "Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo". The holding of these two debates so close together bears witness to the importance and, above all, to the urgency of the issue.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU), on whose behalf I am speaking, welcomes the interest the United Nations is thus showing in African problems. The OAU is especially satisfied by the fact that this interest supports the efforts that the OAU is making on the continent in order to promote peace and security.

We have always said that the real battle that our continent should take up is the battle against underdevelopment, illiteracy, disease and poverty. All other battles are superfluous and, above all, an extravagance, given our limited resources, which should be entirely devoted to improving the economic situation of the African peoples. Thus, it is deeply deplorable and exasperating to see all these conflicts raging in Africa, including the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We will be clear: considering all of its members to be on an equal footing and, above all, concerned to preserve their unity and solidarity, the OAU is not in the habit of damning any of them. Under the terms of the fundamental principles that govern the OAU, its mission is rather to promote understanding, solidarity and good-neighbourliness among African States. This is why it gives priority to settling disputes peacefully through mediation and conciliation. Among the Organization's past achievements are the settlement of border disputes between Algeria and Morocco and between Ethiopia and Somalia in the 1970s, as well as the dispatch of observer and interposition missions to, for example, Chad, Burundi, Rwanda, the Comoros and the Central African Republic.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which concerns us today, it should be explained that from the beginning of the crisis, the pan-African organization endeavoured to create a climate conducive to peace by encouraging a meeting and direct negotiations among the protagonists — that is, on the one hand, between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the neighbours it denounces, Rwanda and Uganda; and, on the other hand, between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and leaders of the internal rebellion. Within this context, initiatives were taken, in particular by the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution — initiatives that were followed up within the subregional framework of the Southern African Development Community.

There is no need to go back to the origin of the conflict in order to understand the deep-seated reasons for the current dissension between the three countries — though we recall that it was a coalition, if not an *entente cordiale*, of their leaders that led to Mr. Laurent-Désiré Kabila's regime coming to power. Seen from two different perspectives, what the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls aggression on the part of its neighbours, those neighbours consider security measures aimed at guaranteeing their own survival.

In this situation, the duty of the Organization of African Unity is to remind all sides of the key principles to which they subscribed in endorsing the Charter of the OAU. First of all, the borders inherited from the colonial

period are and remain inviolable. The African heads of State have recalled this on many occasions, particularly in the case of the border disputes of which we spoke earlier.

In observing this principle, the present boundaries of the Congolese State, bequeathed by the former administering Power, the Kingdom of Belgium, are irrevocable. Any violation of these borders is unacceptable. We are all aware that African States are built upon artificial territories because the colonizers did not bother with realism or objectivity at a time when force had to prevail over the rule of law. Therefore, the only compromise possible for our young States, which were still a long way from being nations, was to accept these borders or risk the permanent destabilization of the African continent. Africa will remain united only if it scrupulously respects its borders.

It is quite obvious that the corollary to this requirement is respect for the sovereignty of each State, including the legitimacy of the established authorities. The recognition of Mr. Kabila's regime was reiterated by the most recent summit of the Central Organ, held in Ouagodougou in December 1998. Moreover, all African States should be able to live in peace within safe and recognized borders, as law and order and security remain the requirements for the survival of any human community.

As we have already stated in the Security Council, there is no contradiction in this area between the efforts made by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity; in fact, they complement each other in a useful way. Even better, because the United Nations has logistical capabilities and because the primary mission of the Security Council is to guarantee peace, greater involvement by the United Nations in the settlement of the Congolese question is desirable.

We support in particular the deployment of interposition and peacekeeping forces in the zones of conflict. This may have the effect of making the borders secure and of neutralizing, if not eliminating, the attacks of the armed opposition.

The French proposal to hold a peace conference on the Great Lakes region also seems interesting to us. Likewise, we welcome the desire for openness towards the internal opposition demonstrated by the Congolese Government, which wants to organize, a national debate bringing together all factions and socio-political sectors of the country.

However, all these good intentions cannot take shape until there is a duly signed ceasefire that all the belligerents undertake to respect faithfully. This is what the Organization of African Unity and the entire international community fervently desire. We hope that this and all other appeals will be heard so that peace can return not only to the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also to the entire region.

Mr. Mwamba Kapanga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*interpretation from French*): It is under the relevant provisions of Article 35 of the Charter of the United Nations and article 15 of the provisional rules of procedure of the General Assembly that my country requested the inclusion of an additional item entitled "Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo" on the agenda of this session of the General Assembly. My Government then expressed the desire to have this item debated in plenary meeting, without its being allocated to one of the Main Committees. I would sincerely like to thank the Bureau of the Assembly for having acceded to that request, which is after all a legitimate one.

Today's meeting is being held four days after the meeting held by the Security Council on the quest for a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In fact, faced with the apparent stalling of the negotiating process, my Government, in conformity with Article 52 of the United Nations Charter, deemed it fitting to bring this matter before the Security Council in order to ask it to give further encouragement to that process.

Taking the opportunity offered by Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter, my delegation would also like to make all the Members of our universal Organization aware of the genuine motives behind the armed aggression that the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its peace-loving people are suffering and to ask them to contribute to the establishment of a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict that is currently tearing my country apart. My delegation bases itself upon the relevant provisions of the Charter to ask the Assembly to understand the determination of the Congolese nation as a whole and of its enormous need for peace and domestic security.

As my delegation stated in the Security Council, it in no way wishes to tax the Assembly with facts and events about which the international community is already sufficiently informed. Its concern is to seek to bring about an understanding of the reasons why, despite the

concessions made by my Government to stop the atrocities of this war, the negotiation process has still not led to the conclusion of a ceasefire.

I am bound to subscribe to the analysis and the conclusions contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization with regard to the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871). This global and highly relevant approach to the question deserves to be further enriched by the lessons to be drawn from certain specific cases, such as that of my country, which is the victim of an aggression on the part of neighbouring States, namely, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi — all of them Member States of the United Nations.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo shares more than 9,600 kilometres of land borders with nine countries, 2,000 kilometres of which are with aggressor countries and none of which are without threat or danger from direct or indirect destabilization. Since Mr. Laurent-Désiré Kabila assumed the country's leadership, the new Congolese authorities, drawing from the lessons of the past, have focused their efforts on bringing peace and stability to the region by embracing the task of exporting peace, security and development, particularly through a constructive commitment to building the institutions of African peace and security through mutual confidence-building measures.

We may recall here the initiative taken by President Kabila, who, in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organized a regional conference on peace and development in the Great Lakes region. But we had not counted on the bad faith and, above all, the boundless ambitions of our current aggressors, who devoted their efforts to ensuring that this initiative failed.

It should be understood that the instability in the Great Lakes region is essentially due to intolerance in all its forms, to uncontrolled movements of refugees, to the increased number of displaced persons, to the great danger to life, and to exclusion, plus the destruction or dismantling and illegal transfer to aggressor countries of the economic and industrial assets of the occupied areas. Unless we are careful, this will not augur well for the speedy restoration of peace in the region.

Given the horrors committed in the course of these hostilities, there is no doubt that our ability to find solutions to our specific problems is hobbled by the falsification of the regional social and political facts by means of excessive propaganda claims of things that are not the case. The presence of Ugandan, Burundian and Rwandan troops on Congolese territory against the will of the host Government indeed constitutes invasion and aggression intended to break up and destabilize the Congolese State.

The Governments of Uganda and Rwanda have formally acknowledged that their troops are present on Congolese territory, on the fallacious pretext of protecting the security of their borders with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My Government has on many occasions informed the United Nations of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, providing irrefutable, damning evidence of the involvement and responsibility of the aggressor countries.

It is clear that the aggression of which the Democratic Republic of the Congo is victim is the work of a coalition of Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda. It is now known that what was portrayed as an "internal insurrection" or a "rebellion of Congolese" against the Government was nothing less than a crude façade to disguise the destabilizing endeavours of neighbouring countries.

The violations committed by the aggressors against my country challenge the fundamental principles of international law. They include acts of aggression, the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a State Member of the United Nations, violations of the fundamental norms and principles of international humanitarian law and massive violations of fundamental human rights. Security Council document S/1999/205 offers convincing proof of these facts. The crossing of Rwandan, Burundian and Ugandan troops into Congolese territory constitutes an act of aggression by the terms of resolution 3314 (XXIX) of 14 December 1974, entitled "Definition of aggression".

Some claim that the internal situation is at the root of the crisis in the Great Lakes region, but there is no need to recall that since 2 August 1998 the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been the target of armed aggression by the Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda coalition. This flouts Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter, which is devoted to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of every State Member of the United Nations.

Although they are parties to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and to their Additional Protocols of 1977, the aggressors have embarked with impunity on

systematic violation, in their areas of operation, of the basic rules and principles of international humanitarian law. The war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is thus not a civil war, as some have falsely claimed. It is in fact armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo by Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

In the face of this situation, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) have organized diplomatic meetings to discuss this aggression. Contacts have taken place in Durban, Lusaka, Victoria Falls, Mauritius, Libreville, Addis Ababa, Yaoundé and other places to find a lasting, peaceful solution to the conflict. Unfortunately, these have yet to bear fruit. Today His Excellency Mr. Frederick Chiluba, President of the Republic of Zambia, is in Kinshasa as part of a mediation effort mandated by his counterparts in SADC. We hope that real progress in the peace process will be made during that visit.

As members can see, negotiations continue at the regional level. My delegation believes that these praiseworthy regional efforts would in no way be hindered by effective involvement by the international community. My Government would like the United Nations to understand the entire Congolese nation's great determination and need to achieve internal and external peace and security. It expects sincere and positive involvement by the international community, which can induce the aggressors to engage in sincere negotiations on peace and regional stability. Such a climate would favour a programme of national reconstruction and development, something to which the Congolese people earnestly aspire.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has repeatedly appealed to its neighbours to join in building regional peace on the basis of common interests. But to its great regret, it notes that its determination to export the culture of peace, friendship and development to all the peoples of the Great Lakes region is being thwarted by the warlike, irredentist and expansionist plans of other States, whose purpose is to destabilize and destroy the Congolese State and break it up into micro-States.

What is there to say about the border-security argument that Rwanda and Uganda are using as a pretext for war? That argument is dangerous and pernicious. It carries the seeds of the destabilization of the whole of Africa and constitutes a clear violation of international law, which does not recognize the theory of *Lebensraum* as a basis for carrying out an *Anschluss* in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The fact is that the aggressor countries want to use the Democratic Republic of the Congo to solve their own internal problems, including the uneasy coexistence of peoples, a population explosion, the rejection of democratization and the exclusion of the majority. The occupation of parts of Congolese territory can in no way guarantee the security of the invaders until they have resolved their own internal problems.

The security argument may be rejected in particular because Rwandese and Ugandan soldiers have been discovered in the West of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more than 2,000 kilometres from the eastern border with Rwanda and Uganda. The so-called rebels who serve as cover for this aggression were not gathered into a body until 10 days after the outbreak of hostilities.

The Great Lakes region is suffering from chronic instability and the total breakdown of peace. For want of a final solution, the focal point of the tension is constantly shifting. First it was Uganda; yesterday it was Rwanda; today it is the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Who will it be tomorrow? No one knows.

That is why my Government wants greater United Nations involvement in the search for a peaceful and lasting solution to the present conflict. My Government is seeking peace and wishes to live with its neighbours in harmony and understanding. My Government agrees to sign a ceasefire agreement to be followed by deployment of an interposition force on our borders, with a strict timetable for the withdrawal of the troops of aggression. The force would supervise and protect the borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with Burundi, with Rwanda and with Uganda. In the domestic sphere, my Government is determined to restoring the rule of law and fundamental freedoms throughout its national territory; it has begun in a concrete way to open up the political arena through such measures as the promulgation of Decree-Law no. 194 of 29 January 1999 relating to the liberalization of political parties.

My Government recently demonstrated its good faith towards this opening by proposing the convening of a national debate to include every region, every political tendency and every socio-political sector of the country, including the so-called rebels, so as to enable them to consider and work for the future of the Congolese nation at the dawn of the third millennium. My Government fully supports the idea proposed by France for an international conference on peace and security in the Great Lakes region. I can assure the Assembly that my

Government is already prepared to participate actively in these future meetings.

My Government is convinced that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will succeed in restoring peace and domestic harmony. However, in order to ensure peace throughout the Great Lakes region, it is of the highest important that peace reign within the national boundaries of Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. The international community has the duty and the obligation to help these three countries to resolve their internal problems, which are the source of regional destabilization.

Until the international community takes every possible step to bring peace to the entire Great Lakes region, the least my Government expects from this meeting is that the General Assembly shall strive, first, towards the acknowledgement that my country is clearly the victim of armed aggression, as defined in resolution 3314 (XXIX) of 14 December 1974, adopted by the General Assembly with a view to defining aggression; secondly, we expect condemnation of that aggression; thirdly, we seek full respect by the aggressors for international humanitarian law; fourthly, we expect withdrawal of the troops of aggression from our territory; fifthly, we seek the deployment of an interposing force along common borders; and finally, my Government calls for the convening of a major international conference on the restoration of lasting peace in the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Kastrup (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is very concerned about the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has escalated into a large-scale regional war. Due to a complex set of strategic alliances, a series of previously unconnected conflicts in the Great Lakes region has blended into one huge crisis that has turned the Democratic Republic of the Congo and parts of the territories of neighbouring countries into a battleground. This crisis has created immense human suffering; it has dramatically increased the already high number of refugees and displaced people in this region; and it is gradually destroying the social and economic base of the countries of the Congo basin and the Great Lakes region.

The European Union strongly condemns acts of violence perpetrated against the civilian population since the beginning of the crisis and calls for an independent investigation of allegations of major human rights violations reportedly committed by all parties to the conflict. In this context, the European Union expresses its deep concern about recent reports of new mass killings in the Kivu region.

The European Union welcomes the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur, Mr. Garretón, and the work of the United Nations human rights field office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the strengthening of which it fully supports. The European Union firmly calls on the parties to the conflict to respect human rights and humanitarian law and to abstain from inciting hatred and from persecuting civilians on grounds of nationality or ethnicity. It calls on all parties to guarantee the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and their unhindered access to the affected civilian population in need. In this context, it is encouraged by the assurances of the parties that they will allow a respite in fighting, called "days of tranquillity", later this year in order to enable the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to carry out a large-scale polio immunization campaign.

The European Union strongly condemns the recruitment and use of child soldiers and combatants and urges all parties to abstain from this practice. We further urge all parties to refrain from laying landmines.

The European Union reiterates its support for the principles of territorial integrity and respect of the sovereignty and security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbouring countries. The European Union's firm belief in the upholding of fundamental principles of the Charter is well known and has been reiterated in recent EU statements, including in the open meeting of the Security Council on the agenda item entitled "The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo" on 19 March 1999. It continues to be concerned about the involvement of several countries of the region — an involvement which has led not to the intended stabilization, but to a dangerous escalation which now threatens the stability of the region as a whole.

The European Union reiterates that the current conflict can be solved only through a negotiated settlement between all the parties concerned with a view

to an urgent political solution to the conflict, leading to the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and allowing the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries in the region to find peace, stability and democracy.

In our opinion, it is most important that all warring parties in the conflict show their unconditional willingness, through concrete steps, to speed up this peace process. In this context, the European Union welcomes President Kabila's preparedness to enter into negotiations with all parties to the conflict, including the rebel movement, and encourages them to conclude a ceasefire agreement as soon as possible. The European Union also urges all other parties involved in the conflict, both the rebel movement and external actors, to participate in a constructive manner in ongoing peace efforts. It emphasizes the need for a political process which must rest on two elements addressing, first, regional security problems, by finding a mechanism that meets the legitimate security concerns of neighbouring countries; and, secondly, the internal situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, by initiating an all-inclusive political dialogue with the aim of establishing a democratic society there. The statement made last week by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo concerning the organization of a national debate is encouraging. Those intentions need to be implemented.

In this context, the European Union emphasizes the need for a continuous and inclusive negotiating process with a format that allows the active participation of all major stakeholders. The European Union reiterates its support for an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region which would help consolidate a peace agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and ensure the stability of the countries in the region. The European Union emphasizes the need also to address the question of the proliferation of arms and the illicit trafficking of commodities in the region, which fuels it. The need to reintegrate disaffected soldiers and combatants into civil society must also be addressed.

We strongly support the regional peace initiatives undertaken by, among others, the Southern African Development Community troika, led by the President of Zambia and supported by the Presidents of Mozambique and of Tanzania, as well as by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The European Union would welcome the more active involvement of the United Nations and the OAU in order to coordinate and streamline the various peace efforts.

The European Union is supporting the regional peace efforts through, *inter alia*, the assistance of the EU Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Aldo Ajello. It would be prepared to consider a rehabilitation programme for the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the case of an effective cessation of hostilities and internal progress on peace, democracy and respect for human rights. It reiterates that it might find it increasingly difficult to continue its present level of budgetary assistance to countries involved in this conflict should they persist with the military option. Considerations in this regard would not, of course, affect purely humanitarian assistance.

We welcome the statement made on 11 December 1998 by the President of the Security Council expressing the preparedness of the Council to consider, in the light of efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict, the active involvement of the United Nations to assist in the implementation of an effective ceasefire agreement and in an agreed process for a political settlement of the conflict. The European Union also stands ready to support efforts which might be undertaken by the United Nations to assist in the implementation of a ceasefire agreement.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Last Friday, 19 March, we spoke in the Security Council on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We did so guided by the desire to uphold peace and encourage the parties to resolve the conflict peacefully. We do so again today in the same constructive spirit of reconciliation, regardless of the title of the General Assembly agenda item.

We would have to be blind to deny the complexity of some of the situations in Africa. We would also have to be blind, and certainly unfair, if we failed to acknowledge the efforts made by most of the countries of that continent to strengthen their institutions, promote human rights and modernize their economies. That is why the international community cannot remain indifferent to the situation in Africa in general or in the Great Lakes region in particular. We are duty-bound to act, and to do so swiftly and generously, working together.

In the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we view cooperation as an ongoing three-phase process. During the current phase, the priority is to obtain an effective ceasefire. The second phase is to secure such a ceasefire by means of an interposition and

monitoring force. The third phase is that of post-conflict peace-building, and in this respect we believe that the White Helmets initiative can make a useful contribution. During those three important stages the United Nations must vigorously support regional efforts, and Argentina is ready to cooperate to the best of its abilities.

There are, however, certain principles of international law that must be taken into account. First, there is an obligation to resolve the dispute peacefully. Mechanisms to achieve an inclusive dialogue must be found, without prejudging the legal status of the various actors involved. In this context, Argentina strongly supports the regional efforts and the Lusaka process.

Secondly, the rule of the inviolability of colonial borders is a principle of general international law and applies to the African continent as it does to the American. Thirdly, within the framework of respect for the principle of the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a system of safeguards that protects minorities' ethnic, cultural and religious identities can be established, as has been successfully done elsewhere. Fourthly, we reiterate the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, a principle that is incompatible with the presence of foreign forces without the prior agreement of the legitimate Government.

Finally, the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that have occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and that are offensive to the conscience of humankind as a whole must be properly investigated and punished. The presence of Mr. Roberto Garretón will certainly be useful, and we hope that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will fully cooperate with him.

The causes of conflict in Africa are many and require comprehensive responses. That is why we share the Secretary-General's view, as expressed in his report on Africa (A/52/871), submitted to us in April 1998, that such conflicts must be tackled comprehensively, uniting the essential elements of peace and security with sustainable development, democracy and good governance. In keeping with that approach, Argentina has maintained a presence in Africa to the best of its ability, and it has endeavoured to make mutually beneficial contributions in the areas of peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, good governance and technical cooperation for development. Today, we renew this commitment.

In conclusion, I should like to say that, as the current coordinator of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, Argentina is particularly interested in ensuring that the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the values of freedom, democracy and respect for human rights prevail and prosper among all its member States.

Mr. Mbabazi (Uganda): In the early part of this session, my country had the opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. On this occasion, allow me once again to express our full confidence in you. My delegation, and indeed my country, has no doubt that the work of the General Assembly has been proceeding smoothly and productively under your expert guidance.

Because of a lack of thorough knowledge of the procedures here, my statement has not been distributed. As I understand it, the photographs that I attached to my statement as evidence of some of the things I am going to say could not be distributed by the Secretariat. But I am happy to say that the document will be available at the table as soon as I finish speaking.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo decided to present the crisis obtaining in that country to the General Assembly for debate. In particular, as members heard from its representative, the Democratic Republic of the Congo accused Uganda, among others, of aggression. At the outset, let me assure the Assembly of Uganda's reaffirmation of, and commitment to, the United Nations Charter, the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other regional and international conventions. Uganda has not behaved aggressively towards the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and neither is it responsible for the current crisis in that country, as the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo alleges. Uganda has neither territorial ambitions nor economic interests beyond the normal course of bilateral and regional economic cooperation. As I had occasion to mention to the Security Council last week, and as I have had occasion to say elsewhere, the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has internal and external dimensions, a fact that is regionally and internationally acknowledged now.

Allow me therefore to elaborate on this point in greater detail. When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) Government took power in Uganda in 1986,

President Mobutu had been in power for 20 years. President Mobutu was not exactly our hero in the policies he pursued and in the way he managed public affairs in the Congo, but for 10 years we coexisted.

After the 1994 Rwanda genocide, the *génocidaires* — the people who were responsible for that horrendous genocide, namely, the former Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and *interahamwe* militia — crossed into what was then Zaire with hundreds of thousands of refugees. As everyone knows, they then proceeded to hold these refugees hostage inside Zaire. The Mobutu Government then helped these *génocidaires* reorganize, rearm and retrain and gave them territorial support to recapture power in Rwanda. The Uganda Government totally opposed this move and made its position very clear.

In preparation for the intended recapture of power by the *génocidaires* in Rwanda, President Mobutu forged an alliance with the National Islamic Front regime in Khartoum, Sudan, not only to aid and abet the crime of genocide in Rwanda but also specifically to destabilize Uganda in the hope that Uganda would then not be in a position to support Rwanda. In fulfilment of this plan, attacks were launched on two fronts; one in north-western Uganda, in a region called West Nile, and the other in western Uganda, in the district of Kasese. Both attacks were from Zairian territory. At the same time, the reorganization and rearming of *génocidaires* in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had reached an advanced stage. The Uganda Government decided to act in self-defence by first recapturing the territory these criminal elements had occupied and following them in hot pursuit into Zaire, as we are fully empowered to do under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. It was this act of self-defence against the Democratic Republic of the Congo-based rebels, which was undertaken with regional and international understanding and support, that resulted in the fall of President Mobutu. President Kabila was a direct by-product of this process.

After President Kabila assumed power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we in Uganda had hoped that since he knew our security concerns, he would address them. Unfortunately, he did not. At that early stage, we understood the weakness of the structures that President Kabila had inherited from the Mobutu regime. President Kabila himself initially pleaded incapacity to handle this situation. That is why he invited Uganda to deploy the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) inside the Congo to flush out the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels who were operating from Congolese territory. A protocol to this effect was signed between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda on 27 April 1998.

For some time, the joint operations that were the result of this protocol were successful. But this was not to last. The situation steadily deteriorated to the extent that some commanders in the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo not only became uncooperative but also started enjoying peaceful relations with commanders of the ADF rebels. Later, when the Congolese armed forces units in these areas mutinied, a leading rebel, who was the son of one of the senior commanders of the ADF, was found and captured in the house of President Kabila's brigade commander in that sector. The choice Uganda had was either to put down by force this mutiny, in support of Kabila, or to remain neutral as long as whoever was in control understood our primary objective of pursuing the ADF rebels. Uganda chose the latter precisely because the Uganda Government did not want to interfere in the internal affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As the situation of the rebellion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo worsened, President Kabila — like his predecessor, Mobutu — went to Khartoum and worked out a deal with President Al-Bashir of the Sudan for the latter to step up support to the Ugandan rebels on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, after that more Ugandan rebel groups were mobilized by the Sudan and moved to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The support to Ugandan rebels by President Kabila's Government has itself since become evident. The Uganda Peoples Defence Forces and the Congolese rebels have captured many Ugandans belonging to various rebel groups operating inside the Congo. The Lord's Resistance Army, the Uganda National Rescue Front, the West Nile Bank Front, the Allied Democratic Forces, which I have just mentioned, and the former Uganda army, under the command of Idi Amin's son, Taban Amin, are now part and parcel of the pro-Kabila armed alliance led by Zimbabwe. This is in addition to the *génocidiares* of Rwanda, the *interahamwe* and the former FAR. These are criminal gangs that have inflicted untold misery on the people of Uganda. They attacked, for example, Kichwamba Technical College in western Uganda in June 1998. The students were locked inside their dormitories, which were then dowsed with petrol and set on fire. Those who tried to escape were gunned down. More than 50 students were burnt to death, and more than 100 of the survivors were abducted.

It would have been a grave omission of its national security duty if the Uganda Government had not taken appropriate measures to address this threat against our national stability.

In the meantime, because of the Congolese internal political contradictions, the rebellion of 2 August 1998 broke out. President Kabila's immediate reaction was to look for foreign military assistance. This was given by Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, which decided on unilateral military intervention instead of waiting for a regional consensus on the matter, as originally proposed by President Museveni. The intervention was on the pretext that the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been invaded by Uganda and Rwanda. As a matter of fact, at that time Uganda had only two battalions inside the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the two battalions that were deployed as a result of the protocol signed on 27 April 1998, and therefore at the invitation of President Kabila. Whereas Uganda was primarily concerned about the activities of the Ugandan rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the intervention by Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, and later by Chad and the Sudan, introduced a new dimension to this conflict. Against the perceived threat of increased destabilization of Uganda, especially by the Sudan using Congolese territory, as it had previously done, Uganda deployed additional forces to counter this threat.

The numerous times the Sudanese military has made incursions into Uganda are well documented and known. These include aerial bombardments and cross-border military attacks. Initially the Sudan was using its own territory as the launching pad for the attacks on Uganda. But when the Government forces lost much of southern Sudan territory to the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, the Khartoum regime increasingly started using the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Whereas Uganda went into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as I have indicated, in reaction to acts of destabilization emanating from that territory, when our forces entered this territory they were brought face to face with the naked threat of another genocide in the region. Like his predecessor, President Kabila is openly supporting the *interahamwe* and the former FAR on Democratic Republic of the Congo territory. The latter are not only a threat to the region but also have an unforgettable record of committing the most heinous crimes against humanity. They have visited their misdeeds on the people of Congo, and mass graves of victims of genocide are in Kisangani, Bunia and other places for all to see. As further evidence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's support to the *génocidiares*, many *interahamwe* and former FAR who were in refugee camps in Congo (Brazzaville) were clandestinely mobilized and crossed over to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are fighting alongside the pro-Kabila armed alliance led by Zimbabwe.

Remember that President Kabila himself, using national television and radio, incited hatred against specified minority groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It will be a calamity if another genocide, in addition to the one that occurred in Rwanda in 1994, were allowed to occur in our region.

As all members, I am sure, know — and according to Alain Destexhe's book, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* — a genocide is a conspiracy aimed at the total destruction of a group, and thus requires a concerted plan of action. The instigators and initiators of a genocide are cool-headed theorists first and barbarians only second. The specificity of genocide does not arise from the extent of the killing, nor its savagery or the resulting infamy, but solely from the intention: the destruction of the group.

The Government and the people of Uganda as a whole, having been victims of the horrendous misrule of Idi Amin and Milton Obote, and having witnessed the most horrific genocide, which was committed in Rwanda in 1994, have developed zero tolerance for genocide. Uganda has adopted this policy against genocide in the firm belief that impunity neither serves the very tenets of the regional and international charters we subscribe to, nor has any moral standing.

Only recently, on 1 March 1999, in Bwindi National Park, at the border of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a Ugandan who was doing his normal job, along with eight tourists from the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand who were visiting our country, met a gruesome end, all at the hands of the *interahamwe*. This shocking, evil act by the *interahamwe* is a reminder to the entire world that their evil programme is still in place.

Let me at this juncture quote one of the regional leaders. When addressing Parliament in Dodoma on 4 November 1998, President Mkapa of the United Republic of Tanzania made an important point:

"One lesson from the Great Lakes region events in recent years is that none of our countries is immune from genocide that can be caused by the fanning of tribal and racial hatred for political and economic ends. We may make fun of the Banyamulenge, but it is a short step from hatred to institutionalized elimination. We should not encourage or countenance it."

I ask the Assembly to heed President Mkapa's warning on this matter.

I would like the international community not to forget so soon the gruesome experiences of 1994. Some people have questioned the right of Uganda or of any other country or group of countries to act on genocide in another country. Our contention is that Uganda, like the rest of the international community, has an obligation to stop this crime against humanity. During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda about 1 million human beings were massacred in the course of only three months, and more would have been killed had it not been for the intervention of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Should the international community leave a Government to kill its own people with impunity in the name of sovereignty?

There is an opinion that a Government, because it is ruling over a sovereign country, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Uganda, has got a right, if it so chooses, to exterminate with impunity any group of people within that country. According to this opinion, Rwanda, Uganda and others were wrong to oppose Mobutu's genocide schemes regarding the Banyamulenge; Tanzania was wrong to oppose Idi Amin in the 1970s, because Amin was just killing his subjects; many of us have been wrong in opposing the slow genocide of black people in the Sudan; and indeed, we were wrong to oppose the racist minority regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa.

Uganda has never agreed with this vulgarization of the concept of sovereignty of the State. There are certain matters that must be universal. Among these are sovereignty of the population and not just the regimes, and the inviolability of the sanctity of life, especially the banishment of genocide and extrajudicial killings.

While Uganda recognizes the sovereignty of States and supports the inviolability of borders as inherited at independence, Uganda remains totally opposed to the violation, in particular by *génocidiares*, of an even more fundamental sovereignty — the sovereignty of the people.

It is not the desire of the Uganda Government to be involved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo crisis. As has been elaborated above, Uganda has been involuntarily dragged into the crisis. Uganda is ready to pull out as soon as its legitimate security concerns are addressed.

Fortunately, Uganda's security concerns — and indeed those of other neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and those of the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself — have been recognized by the region and the international community as real and legitimate. That is why the regional meeting of Foreign Ministers in Lusaka last January established a committee on security concerns of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of neighbouring countries. The committee's terms of reference include working out mechanisms to address these concerns fully and satisfactorily. The Ugandan Government, and I personally, sincerely hope that the external reasons that took us into the Democratic Republic of the Congo are being tackled in a serious way and that this will bring an end to the need to go into the Democratic Republic of the Congo for those reasons.

I will not delve much into the internal politics of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These are matters for the Congolese people themselves. Suffice it to mention a few examples to make the point about the internal dimension of the present problem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Democratic Alliance for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), the political alliance led by President Kabila, was narrow because it was composed of four political groups all from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. When President Kabila took power he failed or neglected to broaden his political base. Subsequently, even the four-party alliance collapsed. Only one of the original four parties now remains in the alliance. Furthermore, as members all know, he suppressed the established and active political opposition. Etienne Tshisekedi was condemned to internal exile and was not allowed to travel outside the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ngandou Kisassou was assassinated in Beni, in mysterious circumstances, before President Kabila even took power. Masassou, who led the Bashi group, was arrested; so was Zahid Ngoma, who led an opposition group. Bugera and others were marginalized, forcing them to abandon the alliance.

In addition to those political problems, the situation was exacerbated by the building of a sectarian army

composed mainly of people from President Kabila's locality and led by his close relatives. This led to total disaffection within the ranks of those who had actually fought, in the new Congolese armed forces, against the Mobutu regime. These two factors ignited the internal rebellion.

But all is not lost. It is the view of the Uganda Government that contrary to the pervasive pessimism about the prospects for reaching a negotiated settlement, a lot of progress has already been made, outstanding problems and obstacles notwithstanding. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) initiative under President Chiluba of Zambia with the assistance of Presidents Mkapa of Tanzania and Chissano of Mozambique has already overcome many of the difficult issues that had impeded the progress of the peace efforts. Allow me to highlight some of them. The following positions have been agreed.

First, it has been agreed that there shall be a ceasefire and troop stand-still. A committee was set up at the last Lusaka regional meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence to work out the details of the ceasefire and the modalities for its implementation. The committee has already held its first meeting, and we await its report.

Secondly, as already stated, the security concerns of the neighbouring countries and of the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself have been recognized, and a committee has been established to work out mechanisms to resolve the question of the destabilization of neighbours from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Thirdly, it has been agreed by all parties, including the Congo Government, that the rebels — the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD) — must be involved in the peace process and must be a signatory to the ceasefire agreement. Because of protocol considerations, it was agreed that the rebels should sign a document identical to that signed by the heads of State, but separately from them. In fact, this was a proposal made by the representative of the United Nations at the Lusaka ministerial meeting.

Fourthly, it has been agreed that a neutral international peacekeeping force should be deployed as an interposition force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and that the United Nations should manage that process.

Fifthly, it has been agreed that all foreign forces should withdraw from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in accordance with a timetable to be worked out by the United Nations and the OAU, and under the supervision of the neutral interposition force.

Sixthly, it has been agreed that a national conference involving all Congolese political stakeholders should be convened as soon as possible, with the assistance of the OAU, to determine the political future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Uganda Government has noted with appreciation the recent position taken by President Kabila committing his Government to internal dialogue.

There remain two sticking points on which agreement has not been reached. The first of these is whether the involvement of the RCD in the negotiations on the final ceasefire agreement should be by direct participation at the level of officials and ministers or indirectly, through proximity talks. Uganda's position is that it is better to have direct involvement of the rebels because it is only then that we can ensure their commitment to the terms of the agreement. No third party can claim to act on their behalf in the delicate give-and-take process required in such negotiations.

The second point on which no consensus has been reached is whether the rebels should disarm upon the signing of a ceasefire agreement whether or not Government forces remain under arms. Uganda's position on this is that neither of the two sides should disarm except in accordance with an agreed position, among other things on army-building, by the national conference. In the meantime, both sides should all be assembled in camps under the control of the interposition force. They should then register their personnel and arms pending the completion of the above process: the process of working out a deal by and for the Congolese themselves.

Despite the remaining obstacles, there is hope that the regional efforts will succeed. These should be supported by the international community. My delegation appeals to the Assembly and to the international community at large to support the regional efforts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I pledge Uganda's active support in this endeavour.

Ms. Coelho Da Cruz (Angola): Angola shares a long border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for that reason remains gravely concerned by the evolution of the situation in that country. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained at a

stalemate despite concerted regional and bilateral diplomatic efforts.

The invasion of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by Uganda and Rwanda represents a serious threat to the integrity and sovereignty of that country and is likely to engulf the central and southern regions of the continent. In that connection, Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe acceded to the request by the Congolese authorities for military assistance, following a decision by the regional defence and security organ of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which was in turn endorsed at the Mauritius summit and by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

Here, the Government of Angola will show solidarity with the people and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as long as they continue to face external aggression. The Government of Angola supports all regional initiatives aimed at a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Congo, so long as the legitimate Government of that country approves them. In this context, the Government of Angola was present at all meetings that took place within the framework of central or southern regional bodies; it has actively participated in good faith and has shown facilitators its willingness to cooperate.

As many delegations have pointed out, the active involvement of the United Nations, in coordination with the OAU and other regional bodies, is crucial in implementing a ceasefire agreement and an agreed process for the political settlement of the conflict. Therefore, the participation of the Security Council, now and at a later stage when the ceasefire has been reached, continues to be needed.

Concerning humanitarian issues, our delegation condemns the massacres of the innocent civilian population that have taken place in Kasika, Makobola and Kamituga. The spread of the practice of genocide in the region must not be tolerated, and those responsible must be brought to justice. The security situation of the thousands of displaced persons has deteriorated as a result of the destabilizing effects of war, and we appeal to the international community and to the organizations of the United Nations system to provide assistance to alleviate their suffering.

Last year, after the Non-Aligned Summit in Durban, heads of State and Government met at Victoria Falls and made a political commitment to put an end to the fighting and to search for peace. This was followed by a meeting of Defence Ministers and other senior military personnel in Addis Ababa to work out modalities, timetables, calendars, resources, and the details of monitoring, verification and the respective troop-withdrawals, in cooperation with the OAU. Regrettably, this process has come to a standstill owing to the reluctance of Uganda, Rwanda and their collaborators to withdraw their forces without conditions.

At this stage, my Government expresses its disappointment at the failure of the January meeting held in Windhoek, whose purpose was the signing of a ceasefire agreement on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Angola concurs with the view that the time has come for the Security Council to become actively involved, in accordance with its Charter mandate on the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Government of Angola commends the courage shown by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the proposal by its President to hold a national debate, which will include the opposition, with a view to easing the political atmosphere in the country.

My delegation also submits that at the appropriate time an international conference on peace, security and stability in the Great Lakes region should be convened under the auspices of the United Nations and the OAU, with the involvement of all the Governments and regions and their respective conflicting parties.

We believe that the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have to be respected. On the other hand, the forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that were invited by the Government have to be differentiated from those whose presence in that country reflects different motivations.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): The successive consideration of this sensitive question by the Security Council and by the General Assembly reflects the deep concern of the international community over the further deterioration of the situation within a State Member of this Organization. We sincerely hope that today's debate can help further synthesize the views of the international community in a common effort to find a comprehensive and peaceful solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Serious efforts must be made to prevent the disintegration of the third-largest nation in Africa, which would have grave implications for the peace, security and stability of the entire region.

Malaysia notes with grave concern the cross-border character of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This phenomenon further complicates what is already a very complex internal situation. We deeply regret the involvement of a wide range of protagonists and the massive illicit flow of arms in the region as a whole. It would be most regrettable, indeed catastrophic, if these developments were to escalate into a major war on the African continent, with serious risks to the sovereignty and territorial integrity not only of the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also of its neighbours. The situation is particularly alarming given the fact that the war there interlocks with other conflicts in the region, thereby rendering any effort at mediation extremely difficult. Malaysia is convinced that there can be no lasting solution unless both the internal and the external factors of the conflict are addressed and satisfactorily resolved.

It is clear to my delegation from the deliberations of the Security Council last Friday that there has been a collective reaffirmation of the need to preserve the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and also those of all the other States in the region. There is an urgent need for an immediate ceasefire which would pave the way for a negotiated settlement of the conflict and for the orderly withdrawal of all foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is, however, the obvious difficulty of guaranteeing that the concerns of the neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are fully addressed in any negotiated settlement. This is a condition that must be met for durable peace to be achieved in the Great Lakes region. There also has to be an assurance of the complete disarmament of the rebel forces. Malaysia believes that, once a withdrawal is implemented, efforts at national reconciliation and democratization, including the holding of free and fair elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, must quickly follow. My delegation is confident that the Congolese people and all the other parties concerned will be able to summon the political will to resolve their problems through dialogue and negotiations.

Malaysia commends the diplomatic efforts that have been undertaken by African leaders aimed at seeking a peaceful solution to the conflict, namely those of South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia, of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). We believe that efforts at regional diplomacy represent a most viable approach in resolving this conflict. Such efforts deserve the strong and sustained support of the United Nations and the international community at large. Malaysia also reaffirms its support for the convening, at an appropriate time, of an international conference on peace, security and stability in the Great Lakes region under the auspices of the United Nations and the OAU. Such a conference should allow for the widest possible participation.

Throughout the Great Lakes region, inter-ethnic violence has resulted in grave human tragedy and suffering. These create obstacles to political progress and economic and social development. The cycle of violence has to be broken. These efforts need to begin among the peoples of the region themselves. They can chart a new course of inter-ethnic relations based on genuine reconciliation and peaceful relations rather than on revenge and the settling of old scores. Massacres and other crimes against humanity must not be compounded by further atrocities and equally heinous crimes. They should be met with the force of reason and the principles of justice, and with respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

Malaysia firmly believes that international efforts to promote peace and stability in Africa should not ignore the magnitude of the socio-economic problems confronting the continent as a whole. The Secretary-General himself has emphasized the importance of social and economic equity and the imperatives of socio-economic development in the quest for a durable peace. We need a holistic approach to the issue of peace and security in Africa, encompassing not only peacekeeping, but also peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building. For the international community, any effort to help build a new, democratic and prosperous Democratic Republic of the Congo should be seen as both a daunting challenge and an excellent opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the promotion of peace and development, particularly in Africa.

The international community can lend its support through this General Assembly. On the other hand, the Security Council must exert every effort, in coordination with the OAU and subregional initiatives and mechanisms, towards securing an immediate and effective ceasefire. The Council should also continue to explore an appropriate role for the United Nations in determining concrete, sustainable and effective measures in the implementation of any ceasefire agreement and subsequent efforts at post-conflict peace-building in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My delegation believes that this should include the deployment of a sufficiently strong peacekeeping presence in the country.

In conclusion, allow me to state that, in my delegation's view, the role that regional bodies can play in resolving various conflicts should be highly appreciated. The United Nations, through the Security Council, must be supportive of regional and subregional efforts. However, neither the Council nor the General Assembly should abdicate their respective responsibilities when such efforts require the full support of the international community, such as in the case of the courageous efforts made by the leaders of Africa themselves as regards the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My delegation hopes that the present debate will contribute positively to that process.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): The unprovoked invasion of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity by Uganda and Rwanda constitute an act of interference in the internal affairs of the Congo. Regrettably, this invasion of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has plunged that country into a devastating war, with serious security implications for the region as a whole. Clearly, this aggression is a violation of international law in respect of the following basic principles: the right of nations to self-determination; the right of self-preservation; and the right of a nation to determine its own destiny without coercion from any quarter whatsoever.

Furthermore, the aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo violates the purposes and principles enshrined in the charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), especially those of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State, and the peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation or arbitration.

In accordance with the stated obligation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) of ensuring that a legitimate Government of a fellow SADC member is not removed by invasion, Namibia, Angola and Zimbabwe intervened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, not unilaterally — not unilaterally — but at the express invitation of President Kabila and his legitimate Government. The decision to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo militarily was made at a meeting of the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee of SADC, which was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, on 18 August 1998. This decision was endorsed later, in September, by the SADC Summit held in Mauritius. This intervention is also in line with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which advocates

> "the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations".

Thus, the sole purpose of Namibia's intervention remains to prevent the collapse of the state machinery and the preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Namibia has taken its action in accordance with the spirit of our national constitution with a view to promoting peace, stability and security in the region. Peace and security are preconditions for development and economic growth. Consequently, it is imperative that the disruption of the democratization process cease and the reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo resume soon.

My delegation is appreciative of the fact that the Security Council has taken up the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in accordance with its Charter obligation of maintaining international peace and security. We therefore urge that a ceasefire agreement, which will bring an end to the suffering of the Congolese people, be signed without any further delay.

Finally, we call on the international community to support the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the reconstruction of their country for the benefit of all the Congolese people.

Mr. Vermeulen (South Africa): This debate comes at a critical juncture, where various regional and subregional peace initiatives are being explored in order to find a peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the Security Council open debate last week, South Africa expressed its extreme concern at the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Taking the historical and regional context of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo into account, the South African Government maintains its belief that lasting peace can be ensured only through all-inclusive negotiations involving all of the parties to the conflict. Our Government is confident that a peaceful settlement to this conflict and lasting stability in the region could be attained by putting into practice the framework agreement established at the Pretoria Summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), held in August 1998. That meeting called for a ceasefire; a cessation of hostilities; the withdrawal of all foreign forces involved in the conflict; and negotiations

among all inhabitants of the Democratic Republic of the Congo aimed at re-establishing a democratic Government in the country.

Within this context, our Government continues to support the efforts of President Chiluba of Zambia, in accordance with the mandate given to him by SADC, to bring about a ceasefire in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. South Africa has been actively involved in talks to achieve agreement with all parties involved in the conflict, including the rebel forces, on the terms of the ceasefire and the modalities for its implementation.

There is clearly an internal and an external dimension to this conflict. We maintain the view that all belligerents should participate in the search for a ceasefire. That is the only way in which the end to these hostilities and lasting stability could be achieved in the region. The first priority, therefore, must be the immediate cessation of hostilities and the signing of a ceasefire document by all belligerents. That agreement should not only take into consideration the removal of the military threat to the present Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but it should also guarantee the security of neighbouring countries. Furthermore, in the view of my Government, the signing of the ceasefire should be followed by the establishment of an international monitoring mechanism under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations.

I should like to reiterate my Government's extreme concern at the deterioration of respect for human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the start of the conflict. The South African Government condemns all human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and requests all belligerents to adhere to international agreements and conventions with regard to a situation of conflict and to ensure general respect for human rights, especially those of the civilian population.

It is in the interest not only of the citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also of the people of Africa and the international community at large that the problems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be resolved as quickly as possible.

The President: Due to the lateness of the hour, we have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting. We will hear the remaining speakers tomorrow afternoon.

I call on the representative of Rwanda, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Kayinamura (Rwanda): Allow me to express our delegation's appreciation, Mr. President, for the excellent manner in which you have been conducting the affairs of the General Assembly.

My delegation refrained from putting its name on the list of speakers. We did so because of our desire to advance the cause of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially as we are aware that the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been on the agenda of the Security Council for quite some time. We also believe that the title of agenda item 167 of the General Assembly is a misnomer because, given the various contributions and the process going on in the region of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), there is no armed aggression against the Congo. We shall try to demonstrate this.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was debated extensively by the Security Council on 19 March. On that occasion, the Council repeated its support for the efforts being made under the SADC initiative, supported by both the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations. Our view remains that these efforts must be supported. The SADC initiative is well focused in terms of a ceasefire agreement, political dialogue and security arrangements. These are viable regional initiatives that have been proved to yield positive results. It therefore serves no purpose to shift the focus from one forum to another, as this is likely to delay an expeditious solution.

But since this matter has been brought up and my Government has been the subject of false and unfounded allegations by the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to use this occasion to refute them in a most categorical manner. The same allegations are contained in an explanatory memorandum annexed to document A/53/232 of 17 September 1998. We take strong exception to these accusations, as they do not reflect honestly the background to, and underlying causes of, the deterioration of the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At this juncture, my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Uganda on this subject. Rwanda has had many occasions to address the General Assembly on this matter, and we do not intend to repeat everything that we have said previously.

The international community is well aware of the tragedy that Rwanda endured, which culminated in the genocide of 1994. That crime was planned and executed by the political leadership, its army and militia, which crossed into what was then Zaire after their defeat by the Rwandese Patriotic Army with the support of the majority of the population of my country. Indeed, the first aggression against Rwanda started when this genocidal army was allowed to enter Zairian territory with its arms.

Secondly, they were permitted to regroup, retrain and recruit from the refugee camps that were located along the Rwanda-Zaire border, where they were fed and granted the status of refugees. Their camps were used as a springboard for launching constant murderous raids into Rwanda in order to carry out their unfinished agenda of genocide. The support that was given to them by the Mobutu Government constituted a crime of aggression against Rwanda.

Thirdly, close to 2 million Rwandans were held hostage by these criminal forces that had the support of the late President of Zaire. There could not be a greater threat to the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country than holding millions of its population as hostages of a criminal army that enjoyed the support and backing of the Zairian Government.

Today's Congolese leadership cannot deny the grateful acceptance of the assistance that they sought and obtained from Rwanda, Uganda and others in their liberation war against Mobutu's dictatorship. As recently as last month, the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo acknowledged the assistance, as indicated in their document transmitted to the Security Council (S/1999/205). In paragraph nine, of that document the Congolese authorities state that,

> "the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (ADFL) had accepted military and logistical assistance from several friendly countries, including Rwanda and Uganda."

In paragraph 10, they recognize the implied quid pro quo of this assistance in the following words:

> "Those two countries would benefit from providing that assistance since an incidental consequence of the war of liberation was the elimination of tension along their borders which posed a threat to their security and, in particular, the neutralization of members of the former Rwandan armed forces (RAF), Hutu rebels (Interahamwe) and Lord's Resistance Army soldiers."

For the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to recognize this relationship between the war of liberation and the security of our countries and then come to the General Assembly to say that they had been the victims of aggression is surprising, to say the least.

That war of liberation lasted from November 1996 to 1997, leading to the President Kabila being installed in power. In the course of less than one year, Kabila had demonstrated his style of ruthless dictatorship, replicating Mobuto-style politics, but with a disturbing difference. He became obsessed with oppression, and fully embraced the genocidal agenda of the late President Habyarimana of Rwanda and former Prime Minister Kambanda of Rwanda, who has recently been found guilty of the crime of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha.

His continued support of the former Rwandan army and militia, the solace given to other criminal armies, as mentioned by previous speakers, and the prosecution of members of the opposition on ethnic grounds were a dangerous departure from the *raison d'être* of the liberation struggle against a dictatorship. Paragraph 9 of document S/1999/205 clearly indicates that the *raison d'être* was a war of liberation that was intended to bring to an end the Mobuto dictatorship by restoring to the Congolese people their long-affronted dignity and establishing a State governed by the rule of law and respectful of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Those two examples clearly point to the twin root causes of the present crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In late 1997, the leadership in the Democratic Republic of the Congo started to champion openly the cause of the *génocidaires*. The President of the Republic himself is on record as calling for the extermination of the enemy, defined as Rwandans, Tutsis or others related to or associated with them. The following statements by the President and senior leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which were made in public, indicate how the Democratic Republic of the Congo had fully embraced the 1994 Rwanda-style genocide.

During the Victoria Falls summit of the heads of State of SADC members, to which Rwanda and Uganda had been invited, President Kabila stated without any qualms before the heads of State, "Those who committed genocide in Rwanda were justified, and they deserve

support now as they did in the past". Like other, similar statements, that statement is actionable. President Kabila should have to answer for such statements before a relevant court of law.

In another statement, the official media of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Kinshasa called on the population to treat the enemy as a virus, a mosquito or garbage which must be crushed with determination and without pity. The Minister of Justice of the Congo went public, stating, "Those Rwandans, those Tutsis — they are insects, microbes and germs which must be eradicated methodically". The Minster of Public Health repeated the same litany of hate messages and propaganda, stating, "Rwandans will become like snakes whose heads and tails have been chopped off, leaving them without the possibility of moving and of no consequence at all".

These statements were followed by much publicized killings in Kinshasa, and less-publicized killings in Kisangani, Kalémie, Uvira and Bunia, in part. Thousands of people remain unaccounted for, while others are known to be incarcerated in various localities in Kinshasa and in Shaba provin...

The foregoing does not represent the rule of law or respect for human rights as promised to the Congolese people by the ADFL and President Kabila. Instead, it is justification to rise up against that dictatorship.

The second cause of crisis arises from the leadership's failure to work with Uganda and Rwanda in order to address their serious security concerns — concerns that were recognized because of the tension during the Mobuto era. The continued support of several non-State armies, which have maimed, killed and abducted innocent people in Rwanda and Uganda, and whose objectives are to carry their wars to the respective countries from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a blatant violation of the territorial integrity of Rwanda and Uganda, even if President Kabila is fighting for them by proxy.

President Kabila should have learned by now that harbouring foreign forces over which he exercises no control — forces with no Congolese agenda — is a self-inflicted violation of the integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He bears all the blame for his ill-conceived strategy of destabilizing his neighbours by use of criminal proxies, instead of collaborating to ensure that the Congo and its neighbours live in peace. The international community must prevail on Mr. Kabila to accept and negotiate a comprehensive, peaceful settlement of the crisis in his country.

We must also stop him from becoming a dangerous vehicle of fascist ideology and terrorism in the region, which he is doing in order to buy support for his war. The statement made on 19 March 1999 in the Security Council by the representative of Zimbabwe, for example, demonstrates how the flames of a fascist ideology can spread fast, as he tried to drag the Security Council into a cynical discourse of parallelism between Hitlerism and the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We must all guard against such tendencies.

Allow me to end by reiterating Rwanda's position on the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rwanda will continue to act in such a manner as to defend its population from the *génocidaires*, former FAR, *interahamwe* and whoever supports them. Rwanda stands with the region in support of the Lusaka process and urges the Democratic Republic of the Congo to resolve its crisis, first, through a resolution of the crisis of governance and leadership and, secondly, through the neutralization, dismantling and containment of foreign non-State armies on its territory. Rwanda is ready to assist in dealing with the former FAR and *interahamwe* in the Congo.

Rwanda calls on the international community to act in accordance with the Convention on genocide and condemn the member countries and individuals that support and comfort those who committed genocide in Rwanda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Secretariat has informed me that the representatives of Burundi and of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will exercise their right of when we meet tomorrow afternoon.

Organization of work

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to report to the representatives that, regarding the subject "Environment and human settlements", which the Assembly will consider under agenda item 30, "United Nations reform: measures and proposals", it is the intention of the President to convene an informal plenary meeting to be held during the second half of April in order to consider the report of the Secretary-General on this subject (A/53/463).

The presidency hopes that at that informal meeting delegations will be in a position to put forward specific proposals. After hearing from the delegations, if the Assembly believes it fitting, the President could appoint a coordinator who, bearing in mind the proposals that have been put forward, would be entrusted with conducting negotiations with the participation of all interested delegations, with a view to producing a draft resolution that will have universal support.

I hope that the Assembly will find this proposal acceptable.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.